

Education and Public Outreach at the Penn State Astrobiology Research Center

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Penn State's astrobiology education and outreach activities are designed to reach a broad audience including graduate and undergraduate students, K-12 educators and students, and the general public.

Higher Education: Our efforts aim to recruit and train a diverse population of students in the field of astrobiology. The WISER program (Women In Science & Engineering Research) provides first-year undergraduate students with invaluable hands-on experience and mentoring from PSARC scientists. An undergraduate Minor in Astrobiology offers 18 credit hours of courses from the departments of Geosciences, Astronomy & Astrophysics, Biology, Microbiology, and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology with at least 6 credits at the 400-level. The Astrobiology dual-title degree program allows graduate students to receive a Ph.D. in a primary area of study and a dual-title in Astrobiology after completing specialized coursework and significant research of relevance to astrobiology.

K-12 Education: Our annual five-day residential workshop for middle and high school teachers in life science, chemistry, earth science, and space science is designed to provide teachers with astrobiology content knowledge as well as inquiry-based activities for use in the classroom. The teachers interact directly with several of the PSARC co-investigators through research presentations, laboratory tours, and inquiry activities.

General Public: PSARC members participate in Space Day at Penn State, an annual one-day outreach event designed to showcase the exciting space-related research being carried out at Penn State. PSARC researchers collaborate with students in the Science Education Program to develop engaging hands-on activities to introduce the field of astrobiology to students of all ages.